

CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Support. Advocate. Prevent.

February 14, 2022

Testimony of Lucy Nolan, Director of Policy and Public Relations
Appropriations Committee, Public Health Subcommittee

H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023.

Department of Public Health - Rape Crisis Intervention and Prevention Services

Good evening, Senators Osten and Representatives Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan and I am the director of policy and public relations at the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (The Alliance). I am here to speak specifically to the recommendation in HB 5037 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 for funding for rape crisis intervention and prevention services. I want to thank you for the opportunity to share how dedicated resources in the state budget impacts preventing and responding to sexual violence in our state.

The Alliance is the state's coalition of nine community-based sexual assault crisis services centers who provide 24-hour crisis interventions including hotline services, counseling, support groups, accompaniments in hospital, police and court settings, and advocacy while navigating complex criminal justice system processes. While not funded from this appropriation The Alliance's attorneys on our Victim Rights Center of Connecticut (VRCCT) team provide no-cost legal counsel to victims and our Post-Conviction Victim Services (PCVS) victim advocates provide victim notification and services to victims whose offenders are being supervised by the Office of Adult Probation Sex Offender Supervision Unit and the Parole Special Management Unit. Each year, The Alliance provides comprehensive, victim-centered and trauma-informed services to nearly 8,000 child, adolescent and adult survivors of sexual violence across our state.

According to the RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) every 69 seconds an American is sexually assaulted. Nationally, one in six girls and women and one in thirty three boys and men are victims of rape or attempted rape, with girls and young adults between the ages of 16- 19 four times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape or sexual assault. Unfortunately, the need for the services of The Alliance and our sexual assault crisis service centers provide preventing and intervening to end sexual violence continues as does the need for the funding through the Department of Public Health.

The Alliance sexual assault crisis services provided through our member centers are the only programs in Connecticut that specialize in both the counseling and advocacy needs of sexual assault survivors and their supporters. Certified sexual assault counselors proudly work to address the unique and emerging needs of all victims, including victims of child sexual abuse, campus sexual assault, prison sexual assault, survivors from ethnic and racially diverse communities and survivors from LGBTQ communities.

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Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence Member Centers



Our hotlines, available to Spanish and English speakers, are available 24/7 for any assistance, from talking to victim of sexual violence and secondary and tertiary victims to accompanying a victim to the hospital for a sexual assault/rape kit. This kind of response is unique to sexual assault victim advocates. It has a long-term positive impact on the physical health and emotional well-being of survivors of sexual violence. For some survivors something may trigger their trauma years later and we are there to help them through it. Additionally, we just began operating our new text to chat option through the English hotline in order to have more accessibility for those who may not be able to speak out loud due to their circumstances, are nervous about the initial contact or just don't like speaking on the phone.

Our member sexual assault crisis service centers have community educators who provide education to students in grades Pre-K – 5, focusing on the prevention of sexual violence through bodily autonomy, appropriate and inappropriate touches and behaviors, developing self-esteem, characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships, and identifying trusted adults to go to for help. Many schools ask us for a second visit with each class to cover healthy relationships with peers, discussing bullying, bystander intervention, and building a healthy school community. Ending sexual violence demands a holistic approach. What we teach is getting through and making a difference. In addition to our elementary curriculum, our member centers facilitates programming for students in middle school, high school, and our campus advocates are present at local colleges and universities.

Child advocates work with the child victims of sexual abuse and their families to help navigate the systems available to them, including sitting on multi-disciplinary teams with law enforcement, prosecutors, and health professionals to assure that children are worked with in a trauma-informed manner. Each member center partners and collaborates with community-based organizations to provide the tools to enhance the self-esteem of the communities youth as well. We are a resource for many in prevention education but also we are there for crisis interventions.

The funding that is supplied through this line item goes a long way and is well spent. We urge your continued support so we can continue our work preventing sexual violence in the state, and to be available when needed most by those who need our support.

Thank you so very much.

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